

SYSTEM OPERATIONAL REQUEST: #2000-29

- *The following State and Federal Salmon Managers have participated in the preparation and support this SOR: Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Idaho Department of Fish & Game.*

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FROM: Marv Yoshinaka, Chairperson, Salmon Managers

DATE: August 8, 2000

SUBJECT: McNary Flow Target and Grand Coulee Reservoir Elevation

GOAL: To provide flow augmentation to improve conditions for migrating juvenile fall chinook in the Lower Columbia River

SPECIFICATIONS:

Draft Grande Coulee Reservoir to a minimum elevation of 1,281 feet as needed to try to meet a weekly flow objective of 160 Kcfs at McNary for the week ending August 20th.

JUSTIFICATION:

Flows at McNary Dam for the week ending August 20 are projected to be significantly below the Biological Opinion flow target of 200 Kcfs. Fish mitigation and water quality have been constrained by available water throughout the year 2000 subyearling fish migration. Significant numbers of subyearling fall chinook from the Mid Columbia and Snake Rivers continue to migrate through the Lower Columbia (see attached passage indices). Past years' data suggest that low flows protract the passage distribution by increasing fish travel time and extending the tails of the distribution.

This year conditions continue to deteriorate through August with regard to temperature and flow. The gradual release of water from Grand Coulee only exacerbates present conditions by forcing the fish that are presently in the Lower River to migrate later in August by increasing their travel time. In keeping with past week's recommendations the fishery managers recommend that flows be increased now when fish condition is relatively good and temperatures have not reached their maximum. The objective of this fishery recommendation is to augment flows as much as possible to help move fish out of the system before environmental conditions degrade even further.